HEADLINE: Governments peaceful behaviour post bomb attack likely to work in their favour securing future ties with investors.

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NARRATIVE LEAD

ZIMBABWE, HARARE — The manner in which the government handled the – seemingly intra-party bombing – may have a positive effect in convincing the watchful potential investors and international community about the change of dispensation and the government's stance on a peaceful election.

Ashton Murwira, 31, Political and Administration Lecturer at the University of Zimbabwe speaks on the past relations Zimbabwe has had with the West and how the country is on the precipice of new beneficial relationships pending their behaviour in the July elections.

"If we had seen a situation where the government would have reacted to the bombing with force and arrest then that would've been a greater concern for the international community," Murwira says. "The government responded in a more mature way by letting the police to handle the investigations and not pointing fingers."

Prior to the new administration - which came around in November last year under Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa (ED) – Zimbabwe's foreign policy largely relied on ties with countries in the East, mainly China. But new pronouncements have been made for a more 360 degree approach with reference to new relations with other countries.

"The issue of re-engagement has been a major sign from the new administration under ED, to show that they are willing to form multi and bilateral relationships with countries they previously had sour relationships with," says Murwira. "These include countries such as the United States of America, the United Kingdom and institutions such as International Monetary Fund and World Bank."

Murwira believes there is an element of trying to correct the relations of the past with the west and at the same time strengthen ties with the East and all the friends that have been on Zimbabwe's side during the Mugabe era.

"These elections are going to be a benchmark to check if Zimbabwe can be fully readmitted into the family of nations – from a western point of view. The commonwealth and most western countries are interested in looking at the level of democracy and peaceful conduct during the elections.

"If they pass, I'm sure regardless of whoever emerges victorious, we will see the normalisation and strengthening of ties between Zimbabwe and other countries."

The country has yet to see any benefits of the multiple deals that the president has made until after the elections – which Murwira says is perfectly normal from a business perspective.

"In our case, the new administration has only been in power for eight months, no investor will invest in a government they think will lapse after the elections. The investors are coming, they are expressing interest and signing MOU's however the actual inflow of Foreign Direct Investment will come soon after the July elections are over."

Due to the peaceful nature of the election process so far and lack of significant interparty violence the situation looks positive as it seems the government is pushing Economic based policies rather than Politics based policies.

The current administration is creating a habitable and conducive environment for potential investors and increasing their ease of doing business.

"There is likely going to be competition between investors wanting to invest in ZImbabwe and this will be to the country's advantage. If u look in the past, Chinese investments have been of poor quality and did not benefit the country and communities so in this case, they might increase the benefits they bring with their investments," Murwira says.

"If the issue of property rights is clear and secure, the investors will come, it isn't about the person or the government or the party - it is about the policies and the investment environment that is being created.

"When comparing ED and Mugabe, ED is putting economics first. Rather than politics. They are making sure if an investor is coming they will process those investments in a short space of time. They are taking notes from Rwanda in

terms of how they process investments. Increasing the ease of doing business," Murwira says.

In the past all the political parties were trying to bridge the gap of isolation that Zimbabwe had and Mnangagwa's government is promoting re-engagement which the MDC has been promising in terms of their campaign strategy with regards to foreign relations. According to Murwira the government is making statements as well as actions to that effect.

"The mining sector will probably be the most preferred by investors because of our vast untapped natural resources - such as the great dyke which has over 55 minerals that have been discovered. There is also tourism and agriculture. Though the potential investors might be cautious to invest in the agriculture sector because of lack of infrastructure which was damaged during the fast track land reform," Murwira says.